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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/865,706	05/29/2001	Takanori Yamazaki	1341.1094	5744

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EXAMINER

O CONNOR, GERALD J

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3627

DATE MAILED: 07/14/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/865,706

Applicant(s)

YAMAZAKI

Examiner

Gerald J. O'Connor

Art Unit

3627

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE THREE MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on April 8, 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) none is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on May 29, 2001 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- 1) ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - 2) ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - 3) ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restriction

1. Applicant's election without traverse of the invention of Group I, claims 1-7, in Paper N^o 20040408 is hereby acknowledged.

2. The cancellation of claims 8-10 by applicant in Paper N^o 20040408 is hereby acknowledged.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 101:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

4. Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. Claims 1-7 are drawn to a method of producing a disembodied data structure. It has been held that such claims are considered to comprise non-statutory subject matter, for merely manipulating an abstract idea without producing any "useful, concrete, and tangible result." *In re Warmerdam*, 33 F.3d 1354; 31 USPQ2d 1754 (Fed. Cir. 1994).

Moreover, current Office practice is to reject as non-statutory under § 101, method claims such as claims 1-7 that fail to require the use of any particular technology (e.g., a

computer) for failing to fall within the technological arts, thus failing to produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result. Claims must be tied to a technological art. To overcome this aspect of the rejection, a positive limitation in the body of the claim is required to recite the use of some technology, such as a computer *per se* or some other computer element that would inherently and necessarily require a computer (e.g. a website), or else some other aspect or element of technology.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Boardman et al. (US 6,456,986).

Boardman et al. disclose a support fee setting method comprising multiple grades of service for users (each user inherently having a userid in order to be stored in a user database), obtaining the grade of a user by referring to a user information database, and setting a support fee based on the grade of the user, but Boardman et al. specifically disclose neither a point system with a point-to-grade conversion table, nor including the actual cost for responding to an inquiry from a user in the determination of the support fee.

However, a point system with a point-to-grade conversion table, and basing a fee on an actual cost, are two well known, hence obvious, elements to include in any method of setting a fee/pricing structure. For example, each "point" could be just one minute of support time, each "grade" could be a level of minutes (i.e., up to 30 minutes, up to 60 minutes, etc.), and including the "actual cost" could be as simple as entitling a user of a particular grade to a particular percentage level of discount.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, to have modified the method of Boardman et al. so as to use a point system with a point-to-grade conversion table, and to include the actual cost for responding to an inquiry from a user in the determination of the support fee, as is well known to do, in order to increase revenue by enticing customers into purchasing excess support coverage in order to avoid shortfalls, similar to the pricing scheme/model commonly used with mobile phones.

Regarding claims 2-7, all of the recited features are found directly in the disclosed method of Boardman et al., or they are inherently present in the modification described above, or they are of such a minor difference that their inclusion would have been self-evident/obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, at the time of the invention, simply as a matter of design choice, since their inclusion could be performed readily and easily by any person of ordinary skill in the art, with neither undue experimentation, nor risk of unexpected results.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to the disclosure.
8. Any inquiry concerning this communication, or earlier communications, should be directed to the examiner, **Jerry O'Connor**, whose telephone number is **(703) 305-1525**, and whose facsimile number is **(703) 746-3976**.

The examiner can normally be reached weekdays from 9:30 to 6:00.

Inquiries of a general nature or simply relating to the status of the application should be directed to the receptionist, whose telephone number is **(703) 308-1113**.

If attempts to reach the examiner are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Robert Olszewski, can be reached at **(703) 308-5183**.

Official replies to this Office action may be submitted by any *one* of fax, mail, or hand delivery. **Faxed replies are preferred and should be directed to (703) 872-9306** (fax-back auto-reply receipt service provided). Mailed replies should be addressed to "Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450." Hand delivered replies should be left with the receptionist on the seventh floor of Crystal Park Five, 2451 Crystal Dr, Arlington, VA 22202.

GJOC
July 9, 2004



Gerald J. O'Connor
Patent Examiner
Group Art Unit 3627